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AUTHOR Kuczynski, Leon
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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews the behavior modification and internalization models of parental control of children, and explores the conceptualizations of children's responses to control that are emerging from the literature on development. In the behavior modification model, no distinction is made among types of child compliance or noncompliance. Researchers emphasize the dysfunctional nature of noncompliance, which is attributed to unskillful parental management. The goal of parenting is immediate compliance, and parenting skills involve power assertion. This model does not consider the problems of fostering children's long-term compliance and developing autonomy. In the internalization model, both external and internal control are considered. The goal of parenting is to promote internal motivation in the child, and parenting skills involve power assertion to a minimal degree. Critics suggest that this model underestimates the importance of external control and parental power assertion. The developmental model suggests three categories of compliance: external, internal, and receptive. Parenting skill involves the use of different strategies at different times, depending on the type of compliance desired. Noncompliance is treated not as a coercive behavior due to faulty parenting, but as an expression of autonomy on the part of the child. A list of 21 references is included. (BC)

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Symposium: **New Perspectives on Child Compliance, Noncompliance and Parental Control**

Presentation: **Emerging Conceptions of Children's Responses to Parental Control**

Paper presented at the Society for Research in Child Development Biennial Meeting, Seattle, Washington April, 1991.

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Leon Kuczynski
Department of Family Studies
University of Guelph

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During the last 25 years, two theoretical perspectives on children's responses to parental influence, internalization theories and behavior modification perspectives on child management have shaped research on parental control and discipline. Although influential, these perspectives had very different conceptualizations of the child's response to control, of the goal of parental socialization and, consequently, of the nature of parental competence and skill. The two perspectives continue to remain unintegrated, and neither provided a satisfactory general model of the control behaviors of parents and children.

During the last decade, a third perspective has begun to emerge as a result of two kinds of research. 1) Investigations of naturally occurring incidents of parental control and children's responses explored how models of parental control and child response could be better grounded in research on day to day parent-child interaction. 2) On a theoretical level, researchers have explored how models of parental control and children's behavior could be better grounded in general developmental processes that underlie parent-child socialization interactions. Examples of these types of research have been brought together in this symposium.

The purpose of my paper is to explore the conceptualizations of children's responses to control that are emerging from the developmental literature. Although is too early to describe a definitive model, the outlines of a distinctive developmental perspective on children's responses to parental control and of parental skill are apparent. I will begin by very briefly reviewing the behavior modification and internalization models of parental skill and children's responses in order to clarify how the emerging approach integrates and differs from previous models. I will also make some very broad generalizations about the problems of each model that have emerged over a decade of research and theoretical critique.

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Table 1: Behavior Modification Model.

First, I present the behavior modification model of child response to control. The behavioral formulation of compliance and child management practices that promote it could be described as an undifferentiated model of child response to control. No distinctions are made among types of compliance or among types of noncompliance. Essentially, if children have not complied within 12 seconds of a parental command then they have noncomplied. Compliance is desirable, noncompliance is not. Behavioral researchers emphasize the dysfunctional nature of noncompliance. Patterson, in particular, has argued that noncompliance is a coercive, antisocial behavior and implicated noncompliance as a key factor in the development of aggression and coercive processes in the home. What is the origin of noncompliance? In this perspective the focus is not on the child's motives or capacities, instead, the focus is on the parent. Noncompliance is attributed to unskillful parental management of children's behavior.

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This perspective of the child's response to control has obvious implications for the conceptualization of parental skill. The principal goal of parenting & the focus of parental training interventions is immediate compliance. It is not surprising that the behavioral model of parental skill consists of an undifferentiated power assertive approach. Parents are taught to use their greater power effectively in order to secure children's compliance with their commands. Essential skills include external monitoring of the child's behavior, and strategies for rewarding and punishing behavior.

The emphasis on external incentives and external controls is particularly striking when it is noted that strategies such as explanations, suggestion, and compromise that decrease the salience of the parent's power or offer the child even an illusion of choice are not only missing from the repertoires of skills offered to parents, but are actively discouraged (Patterson, 1982; Forehand & MacMahon 1981).

Let me summarize just a few comments regarding this model from the standpoint of research on normative parent child interactions.

The principal complaint with this model is that it has a very narrow conception of parenting goals and of parental skill. Specifically, it places much too much emphasis on immediate compliance as a parental goal. It might be adequate as a first step for treating problem noncompliance but it does not adequately reflect control issues in normative families. Most studies that investigate how parents value immediate compliance indicate that compliance is not a particularly important childrearing goal for parents and it is certainly not the only issue that parents face during interactions involving the control and discipline of children. Moreover, sociological studies describing changes in parenting values from the 1930's to 1970's make it clear that there has been a dramatic decline in obedience as a childrearing value and a corresponding increase in promoting assertiveness and autonomy.

Two parental goals relevant to parental control that are clearly missing from the behavioral model and that balance the importance of immediate compliance include the problem of fostering children's internalization or long-term compliance, and the problem of supporting children's developing autonomy in the parent-child relationship.

Table 2: Internalization.

The second model of child response to control has its source in theories of moral internalization. This model differs from the behavioral one in that it focused attention on the child 's motivation for complying. Here, there are two categories of compliance to consider: external control and internal control.

One could think of this distinction in two ways:

1. One was in terms of a developmental sequence in children's motivational development. It was proposed that initially, children's compliance to parental demands is externally motivated - the child's compliance is mostly determined by the power of parents to enforce obedience. If the child was not monitored, rewarded or threatened, the child would not comply. The second stage in the sequence is internalization. Gradually, the child develops internal motives for compliance - self-administered consequences and self-monitoring. With the development of internalization, external inducements are no longer necessary to maintain conformity with parental demands.

2. Internal and external motivation was also used to describe the specific motivational effects of single parental interventions. To the extent that a parent relied on blatant use of force the parent was likely to induce an external motive for complying. To the extent that the parent used subtle, low power strategies or strategies such as persuasion or explanation, the parent was likely to induce an internal motive for the child's compliance.

One implicit aspect of internalization theory was that internal control was considered to be a more valued form of motivation than external control or "mere compliance". It represented a more stable form of compliance and a higher stage of motivational development.

The model of parental skill associated with internalization theory is opposite to that of behavior modification. The parent's capacity to wield brute force needed to promote compliance was taken for granted. The important goal was internalization which required the subtle use of power and persuasive and inductive strategies.

This model has also run into problems when squared with information about everyday parent-child interactions.

1. Many writers have argued that the importance of external control has been underestimated by internalization theory. External control cannot be taken for granted. Kopp's research on self regulation suggests that the development of the capacity to be externally controlled and to comply immediately with the requests of parents is a long, complicated process with its own stages of development (Kopp, 1984). A contribution of the behavior modification perspective is its demonstration that far from being a "given", the ability to wield external power and elicit compliance is one that is difficult for many parents. Some level of compliance is important and may be a precondition for further advances in children's social development (e.g. Kochanska)

2. Also underestimated by internalization theory is the great amount of power that parents bring to bear on children in the course of childrearng. The subtle use of power and induction may be important but it is also less frequent in the everyday lives of children than bald unexplained commands.

3. Internalization theory also placed too much emphasis on the importance of internalization as a parental goal in everyday life. It is highly unlikely that parents have internalization on their minds each and every time they intervene to control their children's behavior. Some interventions do seem to be designed to induce long term internalization of a rule, but most are simply power assertive attempts to secure immediate, here and now, compliance.

4. A final criticism that applies equally to the internalization theory and behavior modification models are their unidimensional, trait-like conceptions of parental skill. Skillful parenting is portrayed in terms of a single class of techniques: effective power assertion in the behavior mod model or effective induction in the internalization model. It is as if the essence of skill was the rigid use of one predominant solution for all situations that arise. Research on parental reactions across a wide variety of child transgressions suggests that parents are much more flexible. In the natural environment parents use a great variety of techniques, sometimes blatantly power assertive, sometimes low power and persuasive. Which approach they use depends on the nature of the child's transgression, age and so on. A lesson from the past decade of research on parent-child interactions is that we have to make situational specificity and discriminations made by parents a part of future models of parental skill.

TABLE 3: Developmental Model of Child Response

Before describing the proposed developmental model of parental control. Let me first show you the model as a whole so you will get the general idea. The main thing to note is that that there is a greater differentiation of categories. Moreover, the differentiations are not only within the compliance categories but also, for the first time, within the noncompliance categories as well. Now, let me talk about compliance and noncompliance separately.

TABLE 4: Developmental Model of Compliance

In this Table I present only the compliance categories. As in the internalization model, distinctions are made on the basis of children's motivations for compliance. I believe that at least three categories of compliance need to be distinguished. These are internally motivated compliance, externally motivated compliance and receptive compliance.

The first two categories are adapted from the internalization models and the behavior modification models. One difference from previous models is that external control and internal control are both considered to be important within the day to day repertoires of children. Children's compliance is sometimes internally motivated and sometimes externally motivated. Moreover, it is probably adaptive for the competent child to behave in internalized fashion in some situations and in externally motivated fashion in other situations

A third category of compliance that needs to be mentioned is receptive compliance. This is a term proposed by Maccoby and Martin (1983) to describe a form of compliance that is motivated by a generalized willingness to cooperate with their parents. Although receptive compliance can be considered to be a form of what we have called internally motivated compliance, it is reasonable to classify separately because its origins are quite different. The concept of receptive compliance originates in findings from the attachment literature (e.g. Londerville & Main, 1981; Matas, Arend & Sroufe 1978) that children with secure attachment ratings are more compliant than children who insecurely attached. Compliance has also been found to be related to maternal sensitivity and responsivity (e.g. Stayton, Hogan & Ainsworth, 1971; Lytton, 1980). Finally, recent laboratory studies (Parpal & Maccoby, 1985; Lay, Waters & Park, 1989) indicate that relatively short interventions designed to train parents mothers to follow, responsively, their children's cues during play sessions can enhance children's compliance. The challenge posed by this category of compliance is that some portion of children's cooperation is attributable not to specific parental control technique but to the quality of parent-child interaction outside of episodes of control.

The model of parental skill that follows from this differentiated model of compliance is one in which parents are conceptualized as having different goals at different times when intervening to control children's behavior. Often, it may be just a desire to elicit immediate control, at other times parents may intend to induce long-term compliance or get their children to internalize a lesson in socialization. The particular goal depends on the situation. The implication for a model of parental skill is that it is no longer adequate to conceptualize skillful parenting in terms of predominant useage of any given control technique. What constitutes skill is the ability to make appropriate discriminations among situations and to choose strategies that are appropriate to their goals. (Table 5).

Table 6: Developmental Perspective on Noncompliance

A feature of the emerging developmental model that is especially distinctive is its treatment of noncompliance. Instead of viewing noncompliance as a coercive behavior due to faulty parenting as proposed by the behavior modification model, the developmental perspective examines noncompliance from the viewpoint of a normal, noncomplying child.

It is noted that noncompliance occurs frequently even in normative, well-functioning families. So, it is not adequate to define noncompliance entirely in terms of childhood dysfunction. Moreover, it is proposed that noncompliance may actually serve positive functions in children's social development. For instance, some level of noncompliance to parental authority is a positive sign of children's developing autonomy and assertiveness. The child's motive for noncomplying is assumed to be to protect autonomy. When children say "no" to parents they, much like competent, assertive adults are attempting to protect their freedom from control by others. The child's specific noncompliant behaviors can be viewed as interpersonal influence strategies which they use to influence parents to modify or drop their demands. Like parental control techniques children's noncompliant behaviors vary in their assertiveness and in their skill as influence strategies.

This perspective on noncompliance as autonomy expression is currently the focus of a great deal of research in a large number of laboratories . Kopp and Klimes-Dugan and Crockenberg, for example, will be reporting their own system of categorizing noncompliance. The particular categories reproduced here have been proposed by Kochanska and myself. These are intended to capture differences in levels of assertiveness and social skill represented by different forms of noncompliance. The category of negotiation for, instance, is assertive but it is a more skillful way of expressing autonomy than direct defiance.

The model of parental competence that emerges from this developmental model also diverges from that of the behavior modification perspective. What is the parent's goal when faced by noncompliance? We assume that the goals can be quite complex. Depending on the issue or on the way in which the child expresses resistance the parent's goal may be to enforce compliance in the attempt to preserve their influence over children's behavior, it may be to acquiesce to the child's control in the attempt to promote the child's autonomy, or, it may be to provide differential feedback for appropriate and inappropriate forms of resistance in the attempt to improve the child's social skills. As was described for compliance, an important element of parental skill for handling noncompliance in this perspective is the ability to make discriminations between various goals and situations and to choose an appropriate course of action.

In summary, a rather complex model of children's obedience is required to understand the behavior of children and parents in childrearing interactions. An underlying assumption of this developmental model is that parents in well functioning families make some rather fine contextual discriminations that guide their efforts to secure their children's compliance and to appropriately respond to their children's noncompliance. However, even greater complexity needs to be incorporated into models of parental skill because cutting across each of the issues discussed in this talk is the fact that parents also adapt their influence strategies to developmental changes occurring within their children. Attempts to systematically map the changes that occur in parent-child interactions during the course of children's development and to understand the processes that underlie these changes are just beginning. However, it is clear that something of the dynamic nature of socialization processes will be reflected in future developmental conceptions of children's compliance and of parental competence.

Table 1

Behavior Modification Model of Child Response to Parental Control

(e.g. Patterson; Forehand)

COMPLIANCE/NONCOMPLIANCE

PERSPECTIVE ON CHILD NONCOMPLIANCE

- aversive for parents
- dysfunctional for child
- unskilful parental management

PERSPECTIVE ON PARENTAL SKILL

GOAL - promote immediate compliance

SKILL
- high power strategies
- external monitoring, reward, punishment
- minimal use of explanation

Table 2

Internalization Theory Models of Child Response to Parental Control

(e.g. Hoffman; Lepper)

EXTERNAL CONTROL

INTERNALIZATION

PERSPECTIVE ON CHILD COMPLIANCE

- **motivational basis of compliance**
- **external control "mere compliance" taken for granted except as precondition for internalization**

PERSPECTIVE ON PARENTAL SKILL

GOAL - **promote internally motivated behavior**

SKILL
- **minimal, subtle use of power**
- **use of reasoning, induction**

Table 3

DEVELOPMENTAL MODEL OF CHILD RESPONSES TO PARENTAL CONTROL

EXTERNALLY MOTIVATED COMPLIANCE

INTERNALLY MOTIVATED COMPLIANCE

RECEPTIVE COMPLIANCE

PASSIVE NONCOMPLIANCE

DIRECT DEFIANCE

SIMPLE REFUSAL

NEGOTIATION

Table 4

DEVELOPMENTAL MODEL OF CHILD COMPLIANCE

EXTERNALLY MOTIVATED COMPLIANCE

INTERNALLY MOTIVATED COMPLIANCE

RECEPTIVE COMPLIANCE

PERSPECTIVE ON CHILD COMPLIANCE

- **motivational basis of compliance**
- **developmental underpinnings**
- **consider adaptive value for child**

PERSPECTIVE ON PARENTAL SKILL

GOAL
- **depends on situation**
  - **immediate compliance?**
  - **longterm compliance?**
  - **receptivity to influence?**

SKILL
- **discriminate goals**
- **choose appropriate strategy**

Table 5

Adapting Control Strategies to Socialization Goals

GOAL		Strategy
EXTERNAL COMPLIANCE	-	high power strategies
INTERNAL COMPLIANCE	-	inductive strategies
RECEPTIVE COMPLIANCE	-	responsive interaction

Table 6

DEVELOPMENTAL MODEL OF CHILD NONCOMPLIANCE

PASSIVE NONCOMPLIANCE

DIRECT DEFIANCE

SIMPLE REFUSAL

NEGOTIATION

PERSPECTIVE ON CHILD NONCOMPLIANCE

- **expression of child's developing autonomy**
- **child's strategy for influencing parents**
- **vary in assertiveness and skill**

PERSPECTIVE ON PARENTAL SKILL

GOAL
- **depends on situation**
  - **preserve ability to influence child**
  - **promote autonomy & assertiveness**
- **improve interpersonal skill**

SKILL
- **discriminate goals**
- **choose appropriate strategy**

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